

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, 4, 6-14, and 16 were pending in the application. Claims 1 and 14 have been amended. No claims have been added. Claim 4 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Therefore, claims 1, 2, 6-14, and 16 remain pending and are resubmitted for consideration.

Claims 1, 2, 6, 7, and 14: Saiguchi

Claims 1, 2, and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Publication No. 2001/0011810 (hereinafter "Saiguchi"). Claims 4, 6, and 7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Saiguchi. Claim 4 has been cancelled. The rejections should be withdrawn for at least the following reasons.

Saiguchi fails to disclose, teach, or suggest each and every element of the claims. For example, amended claim 1 calls for an occupant protection system that comprises, among other things, a bag enclosure in which "the perimeter of the enclosure is smaller than the perimeter of the airbag in a fully inflated condition," which is not disclosed, taught, or suggested by Saiguchi. Furthermore, Saiguchi does not disclose, teach, or suggest an airbag device that comprises, among other things, a bag enclosure in which "a circumference of a cross-section of the bag enclosure in the width direction of the seat pan is smaller than a corresponding cross-sectional circumference of the enclosed portion of the airbag when fully inflated," as called for by amended claim 14.

According to the Examiner, the bag enclosure of Saiguchi in Figure 47, although rupturing at some point, would have a smaller perimeter than an unrestrained portion of the airbag in an inflated state. *See* Office Action at p. 7, lines 4-6. The Examiner further states that the bag enclosure "would provide resistance that would inherently confine the central portion of the airbag to provide a narrower perimeter." Office Action at p. 7, lines 7-8. As amended, claim 1 calls for the enclosure to be smaller than the "perimeter of the airbag in a fully inflated condition." Claim 14 calls for a circumference of a cross-section of the bag enclosure to be smaller than a corresponding portion of the airbag "when fully inflated." To the contrary, the loop strap (enclosure) 632 in Saiguchi includes a stitched section 632a,

which makes the loop strap 632 only *initially* smaller. *See* Saiguchi at Fig. 47. In Saiguchi, the airbag 630 is initially restricted by the loop strap 632 and then, after the expanding airbag 630 applies a sufficient force, the stitching 632a breaks, which allows the loop strap 632 to fully open and the airbag 630 fully expands. After the airbag 630 fully expands and the stitching section 632a breaks, the perimeter of the loop strap 632 of Saiguchi is larger than the airbag 630. The stitching 632a does not alter the actual perimeter of the loop strap 632. The stitching section 632a in Saiguchi will break open to allow the loop strap 632 to fully open and the airbag 630 to *fully* inflate and, at that state, the actual perimeter of the loop strap 632 is *larger* than the airbag 630. *See* Saiguchi at ¶ [0268] and at Fig. 47. Therefore, the rejection of independent claims 1 and 14 should be withdrawn.

Claims 2, 6, and 7 depend from claim 1 and are allowable therewith, for at least the reasons set forth above, without regard to the further patentable subject matter set forth in these dependent claims.

Claims 1, 2, 8-14, and 16: AAPA, Saiguchi, and Stanger

Claims 1, 2, 8-12, 14, and 16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Applicant's Admitted Prior Art (hereinafter "AAPA") in view of Saiguchi. Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over AAPA and Saiguchi in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,979,929 (hereinafter "Stanger"). The rejections should be withdrawn for at least the following reasons.

AAPA, Saiguchi, and Stanger, taken together or separately, fail to disclose, teach, or suggest each and every element of the claims. For example, amended claim 1 calls for an occupant protection system that comprises, among other things, a bag enclosure in which "the perimeter of the enclosure is smaller than the perimeter of the airbag in a fully inflated condition," as called for by claim 1, or a bag enclosure in which "a circumference of a cross-section of the bag enclosure in the width direction of the seat pan is smaller than a corresponding cross-sectional circumference of the enclosed portion of the airbag when fully inflated," as called for by amended claim 14.

The Examiner correctly states that AAPA does not disclose a bag enclosure. *See* Office Action at p. 5, line 15. The Examiner contends that it would have been obvious to modify the airbag arrangement of APPA to include the enclosure of Saiguchi to provide an airbag that more efficiently restrains movement and absorbs impact energy. *See* Office Action at p. 5, lines 18-21. However, as mentioned above, Saiguchi fails to disclose, teach, or suggest an enclosure that is smaller than the “perimeter of the airbag in a *fully inflated condition*.” Claim 14 calls for a circumference of a cross-section of the bag enclosure to be smaller than a corresponding portion of the airbag “*when fully inflated*.” Stanger fails to cure the deficiencies of AAPA and Saiguchi. Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1 and 14 is respectfully requested.

Claims 2, 8-13, and 16 depend from claim 1 or claim 14 and are allowable therewith, for at least the reasons set forth above, without regard to the further patentable subject matter set forth in these dependent claims.

Conclusion

Favorable reconsideration of the application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

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The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check or credit card payment form being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

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